

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE OF THE CITY OF GROSSE POINTE WOODS HELD ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2023, IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS/COURTROOM OF THE ROBERT E. NOVITKE MUNICIPAL CENTER, 20025 MACK PLAZA DR., GROSSE POINTE WOODS, MICHIGAN.

Mayor Bryant called the meeting to order at 8:32 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Bryant
Council Members: Brown, Gafa, Granger, Koester, McConaghy, Vaughn
ABSENT: None

Also Present: City Administrator Schulte
Assistant City Administrator Como
City Attorney Tomlinson
Treasurer/Comptroller Murphy
City Clerk Antolin
Director of Public Services Kowalski
City Engineer Pangori
City Planner Wolf
McKenna Representative Jackson

Motion by Granger, seconded by Gafa, that all items on tonight's agenda be received, placed on file, and taken in order of appearance.

Motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: Brown, Bryant, Gafa, Granger, Koester, McConaghy, Vaughn
No: None
Absent: None

Motion by Granger, seconded by Vaughn, to receive and place on file the additional documents submitted regarding Front Yard Gardens.

Motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: Brown, Bryant, Gafa, Granger, Koester, McConaghy, Vaughn
No: None
Absent: None

The purpose of tonight’s meeting was to address Front Yard Structure – Ordinance Revision. City Planner Wolf provided an overview of her memo dated November 20, 2023. She stated that the following are considered a “structure” currently exempt and permitted to be located within the front or side yard setbacks:

- Fence;
- Pole containing a basketball hoop;
- Flagpole;
- Light pole;
- Mailbox;
- Air conditioning condensing unit;
- Unenclosed outside porch.

At the September 26, 2023 Planning Commission meeting, the Commission recommended the following:

1. Mini-Libraries: To include in the exemptions, a free mini-library with no more than one per property, that is less than 5 feet in height and no more than 4 Square Feet in Total Area. This was based on examples from other communities and current mini-libraries in the city.
2. Raised Garden Bed: To preserve the community character and aesthetics of the City, it was recommended **not** to include raised planters within the exemptions. Without the inclusion, they are only permitted in the side yard and rear yard. This would not pertain to raised landscape borders that run along the front of residential structures or around trees in the front yard setback.

If the Committee-of-the-Whole desired to have additional consideration for raised garden beds in the front yard, the following were suggested:

1. Placement – allowing enough room between lot lines and leaving space to enter and exit vehicles. Keeping a certain distant from sidewalks for safety purposes.
2. Size – Set a specific size for all properties. Set an agreeable percentage of yardage and/or keeping a certain distance from existing buildings.

City Planner Wolf answered questions from the Committee regarding setback requirements, required materials, and permitting. In regards to mini-libraries, since it is a community service, it was suggested from the Committee that there should be no fee associated with the permit.

Since the 1948 Allard complaint regarding raised garden beds in the front yard is the only one known, the Committee stated that this is a neighborhood issue rather than a community-wide issue. There are hardly any communities that regulate this issue. There is a concern that, if the city is

forced to regulate this topic, the residents may not like the outcome. It was suggested that the neighbors should attempt to discuss and reach a compromise that is agreeable to both parties.

There was a consensus of the Committee-of-the-Whole, to revisit this topic and discuss within 60-90 days at a future meeting.

The Committee-of-the-Whole and Administration concurred that the Zoning ordinance should be revised to include mini-libraries to the list of exemptions of allowable structures in the front yard and to clarify the definition of “structure” in the Zoning ordinance. City Attorney Tomlinson will be working with City Planner Wolf, Councilmember Vaugh (Planning Commission Representative) and the Planning Commission to address these items.

Under New Business, no one wished to be heard.

Under Public Comment, the following individuals were heard:

- Meredith Magin, 1948 Allard Ave. – Front Yard Gardens
- Rebecca Moin, 1956 Allard Ave. – Front Yard Gardens
- Wilson Moin, 1956 Allard Ave. – Front Yard Gardens
- Nadia Anusbigian, 1953 Allard Ave. – Front Yard Gardens
- Kimberly Moin, 1956 Allard Ave. – Front Yard Gardens
- Nathaniel Janick, 1948 Allard Ave. – Front Yard Gardens
- Pam Crites, 1343 Anita St. – Front Yard Gardens

The individuals who spoke under Public Comment were willing to discuss the issue with each other in efforts to come up with a resolution, provided there is a mediator to facilitate the meeting.

Motion by Granger, seconded by Koester, that the meeting of the Committee-of-the-Whole be adjourned at 9:17 p.m. PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul P. Antolin
City Clerk

Arthur W. Bryant
Mayor